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Tirana, July, 25, 2011

To: The Honorable Jean Schmidt
Co-Chair, Albanian Issues Caucus
U.S. House of Representatives

Re: Thank you for meeting and potential follow-up on Albania

Dear Congresswoman Schmidt,
Dear Congresswoman Schmidt:

I would like to thank you very much for meeting with me when I was in Washington last week. I am so pleased that you have taken such a personal interest in Albania. You and Congressman Engel make a dynamic team as the Co-Chairs of the Albanian Issues Caucus, and my colleagues and I in the Government of Albania look forward to continuing to work with you.

I was particularly glad that you stated a strong interest in visiting Albania in the near future. Congressman Engel indicated his desire to do the same in my subsequent meeting with him. Please consider this letter an official invitation from the Government of Albania for both of you to lead a Congressional delegation to visit our country as soon as possible. Ambassador Galanxhi and our team in Washington look forward to coordinating with you further on this trip.

I also appreciated your offer to help raise awareness in the U.S. Congress of issues important to Albania. My government does have one current request along those lines: we hope that you and Congressman Engel may be amenable to circulating a "Dear Colleague" letter. We have in mind a letter that would brief your fellow Members of Congress on Albania's recent progress, including NATO membership and how the country's democratic institutions successfully met the challenge of conducting and adjudicating our local elections this past May. If you agree, we envision the letter also requesting that additional Members join the Albanian Issues Caucus. Please see the attached draft for your further consideration and refinement.

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Thank you again for your time last week and for your continuing efforts on behalf of U.S.-Albania relations. I look forward to working with you further and to seeing you in Tirana as soon as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

With kindest regards,



Genc Pollo
Minister for Innovation and Information Communication Technology,
Republic of Albania

Cc: The Honorable Gilbert Galanxhi, Ambassador, Republic of Albania
Cc: Dee Weghorst, Deputy Chief of Staff, Congresswoman Jean Schmidt
Cc: Avni Mustafaj, Executive Director, National Albanian American Council

Attachment: Draft "Dear Colleague" letter on Albania

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**COMMEND ALBANIA'S RECENT PROGRESS
JOIN THE ALBANIAN ISSUES CAUCUS!**

August XX, 2011

Dear Colleague:

We wish to bring to your attention recent progress in Albania, one of our newest NATO allies and one of the world's most pro-American countries. Albania has been, in the words of U.S. Ambassador Alex Arvizu, **"a net provider of global security"**, including by contributing forty-four troops to the NATO-led mission in Kandahar, Afghanistan. On the economic front, in contrast to some other countries in the region, Albania's **GDP is growing** (by an estimated 3.1% in 2010), and the country actively seeks U.S. investment.

Albania's democratic institutions recently proved up to the task of conducting and **adjudicating hard-fought local elections**, held on May 8th, including the razor-thin vote for the mayoralty of Tirana, Albania's capital and largest city. Ultimately, the Electoral College (EC) of Albania, an independent judicial body that serves as the court of final appeal for election disputes, decided on July 8th that Democratic candidate Lulzim Basha had defeated Socialist incumbent Edi Rama by 81 votes out of approximately 250,000 cast.

The EC previously had ordered a transparent count of all misplaced ballots in Tirana, invalidating the Albanian Central Election Commission's earlier declaration that Mr. Basha had won. After considering five separate appeals, the EC determined that Mr. Basha had indeed prevailed. Meanwhile, the Socialists made gains in other localities, resulting in defeated Democratic Party mayors taking a step fundamental to any maturing democracy: **accepting and carrying out a peaceful transition of authority**.

As we know from our own recent history, close elections can test the most stable of democracies. Albania remains politically divided, and the country needs further election reforms, but **its democratic institutions passed this test**, only 20 years removed from the Communist era. We urge you to commend Albania's recent progress and to **join us as members of the Albanian Issues Caucus**. To join, please contact Dee Weghorst with Congresswoman Schmidt (5-3164) or Jason Steinbaum with Congressman Engel (5-2464).

Sincerely,

Eliot Engel
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Albanian Issues Caucus

Jean Schmidt
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Albanian Issues Caucus

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Additional information is available at the U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.*

Hamill, Elizabeth

From: Thompson, Scott
Sent: Friday, July 29, 2011 3:56 PM
To: 'Weghorst, Dee'
Cc: Gilbert Galanxhi; 'Ermelinda Muho'; 'Avni Mustafaj'
Subject: thank you and draft Albania Dear Colleague from Minister Genc Pollo
Attachments: Minister Pollo's letter to Congresswoman Schmidt.pdf; WASHINGTON-#5184121-v1-Albania_Dear_Colleague_final.DOCx

Hello, Dee, thank you to you and Congresswoman Schmidt for meeting recently with Ambassador Galanxhi, Minister Pollo, and myself. Please find attached a note from the Minister to the Congresswoman expressing his personal thanks.

As you will see, the Minister's note also includes a request for the Albanian Issues Caucus Co-Chairs to consider sending out a Dear Colleague on Albania. We have provided the attached draft for your consideration, which we also will send to Jason Steinbaum with Congressman Engel. Thank you again, Dee, and I look forward to talking to you about this again soon.

Best regards,
Scott

Scott Thompson
Associate
Patton Boggs LLP
202-457-6110

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7/29/2011

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